



Iceberg Diseases Bulletin #2

Maedi Visna

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Maedi Visna is a virus that causes lung disease and chronic wasting in sheep. Animals can become infected at any point in their lifetime. The prevalence of this virus is thought to have doubled in GB over the past 10 years. Characteristic of most iceberg diseases, the virus is slow to show symptoms after infection and by the time symptoms do begin to show, a large percentage of the flock is likely to be infected. There is no treatment for this disease, the best method of prevention is to keep it out of your flock.

Signs You May See In Your Flock

- Chronic pneumonia
- Dry cough
- Wasting/weight loss (despite a good appetite)
- Arthritis
- Chronic mastitis- hard and lumpy udders, that don't appear painful
- Neurological signs: muscle tremors and/or incoordination (less common)
- Toe dragging/hind leg paralysis

How Infection Spreads

- Lambs ingesting infected milk
- Close contact, spread via respiratory droplets or aerosols- housing and at feeding troughs are high risk areas
- Semen of infected rams
- Saliva and urine

Disease Diagnosis

- ELISA test using blood or milk samples. However, these tests are not good at detecting early infections.
- Thin ewes can be used to test as a screening test.
- All rams should be blood tested.
- Post-mortem- showing heavy, rubbery lungs that have a mottled, grey colour.



Healthy lungs (left) vs. MV infected lungs (right). Image credit: Hal Thompson and Richard Irvine